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# Report of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names on the work of its twenty-ninth session

**(Bangkok, 25-29 April 2016)**

*Summary*

The twenty-ninth session of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names was held at the headquarters of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific in Bangkok from 25 to 29 April 2016, in accordance with Economic and Social Council decision 2014/240.

The present report describes the activities of the session and presents the major findings of the Group of Experts, focusing primarily on the importance of its work in supporting United Nations Conferences on the Standardization of Geographical Names and the essential assistance it continues to afford Member States in the standardization of geographical names and related areas of cartography and geographical information management.

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# I. Matters calling for action by the Economic and Social Council or brought to its attention

## A. Draft decisions for adoption by the Council

1. The United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names recommends to the Economic and Social Council the adoption of the following draft decisions:

**Draft decision I**
**Report of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names on its twenty-ninth session, the provisional agenda and dates for the thirtieth session and the dates for the Eleventh United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names**

The Economic and Social Council:

(a) Takes note of the report of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names on its twenty-ninth session;[1]

(b) Decides that the thirtieth session of the Group of Experts shall be held in New York on 7 and 18 August 2017, and approves the provisional agenda for the session as set out below:

**Provisional agenda for the thirtieth session of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names**

1. Opening of the session.
2. Adoption of the agenda.
3. Reports of the working groups.
4. Reports of the liaison officers.
5. Organizational matters concerning the Eleventh United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names.
6. Review of the statute of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names.
7. Election of officers.
8. Planning for the implementation of the recommendations of the Eleventh United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names.
9. Working groups for future requirements.
10. Provisional agenda for the thirty-first session of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names.
11. Other business;

[1] E/2016/66.

(c) Decides that the Eleventh United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names shall be held in New York from 8 to 17 August 2017, and approves the revised provisional agenda for the Conference as set out below:

**Revised provisional agenda for the Eleventh United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names**

1. Opening of the Conference.
2. Election of the President of the Conference.
3. Organizational matters:
   (a) Adoption of the rules of procedure;
   (b) Adoption of the agenda;
   (c) Election of officers other than the President;
   (d) Organization of work;
   (e) Credentials of representatives to the Conference.
4. Reflection on the past, present and future: the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names.
5. Reports by Governments on the situation in their countries and on the progress made in the standardization of geographical names since the Tenth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names (for distribution only).
6. Reports on the work of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names and its divisions, working groups and task teams since the Tenth Conference.
7. National and international meetings, conferences, symposiums, publicity and publications.
8. Measures taken and proposed to implement United Nations resolutions on the standardization of geographical names, including the economic and social benefits.
9. National standardization:
   (a) Field collection of names;
   (b) Office treatment of names;
   (c) Treatment of names in multilingual areas;
   (d) Administrative structure of national names authorities, legislation, policies and procedures;
   (e) Toponymic guidelines for map editors and other editors.
10. Geographical names as culture, heritage and identity (including indigenous, minority and regional language names).
11. Exonyms.

12. Toponymic data files and gazetteers:
    (a) Content requirements and standards;
    (b) Data management and interoperability;
    (c) Data services, applications and products (for example, gazetteers and web services).
13. Terminology in the standardization of geographical names.
14. Writing systems and pronunciation:
    (a) Romanization;
    (b) Conversion into non-Roman writing systems;
    (c) Writing of names in unwritten languages;
    (d) Pronunciation.
15. Country names.
16. Toponymic education.
17. Features beyond a single sovereignty and international cooperation:
    (a) Features common to two or more nations;
    (b) Bilateral/multilateral agreements.
18. Arrangements for the Twelfth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names.
19. Adoption of resolutions of the Eleventh United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names.
20. Adoption of the report of the Conference.
21. Closing of the Conference.

**Draft decision II**
**Amendments to the statute of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names**

The Economic and Social Council decides to approve the amendments to the statute of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names proposed by the Group of Experts as follows:

1. Under "I. Aims", after subparagraph (c), insert a new subparagraph, reading: "(d) To emphasize, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, respecting the equality among languages, the significance of geographical names as a part of the historical and cultural heritage and identity of nations.", and renumber the subsequent subparagraphs;

2. Under "II. Principles", after paragraph 4 (b), insert a new subparagraph, reading: "(c) The standardization of geographical names must pay attention to the inherited geographical names and their significance in the preservation of local, regional and national heritage and identity.";

3. Under, "III. Functions", after paragraph 7, insert a new paragraph, reading: "8. To increase the awareness of and respect for different languages, nations and cultures in an equal manner by promoting the use of geographical names that have been standardized on a national basis and that therefore respect local, regional and national heritage and identity;", and renumber the subsequent paragraphs.

## B. Decisions brought to the attention of the Council

2. The following decisions adopted by the Group of Experts are brought to the attention of the Council:

**29/101**
**Report of the Chair of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names**

The United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names:

(a) Took note of the report of the Chair of the Group of Experts;

(b) Welcomed the initiative of the Bureau of the Group of Experts to reflect on how the working modalities of the Group of Experts could be improved, and took note of the specific proposals made by the Bureau;

(c) Agreed that it is indeed useful to periodically review the working methods of the Group of Experts in order to respond effectively to evolving policy needs and the changing information and communications technology environment;

(d) Encouraged the Bureau of the Group of Experts to elaborate in a transparent and consultative manner, with all Member States, specific proposals for review and possible adoption at the Eleventh United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names, to be held in 2017, to be forwarded to the Economic and Social Council for approval, including, but not limited to, the review of the periodicity and length of United Nations Conferences on the Standardization of Geographical Names and sessions of the Group of Experts, the articulation of the business case and a long-term vision for the Group of Experts and the definition of the relationship with the United Nations Initiative on Global Geospatial Information Management.

**29/102**
**Report of the secretariat of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names**

The United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names acknowledged and expressed its appreciation for the comprehensive report of the secretariat of the Group of Experts describing the activities undertaken in the two-year period in support of the work of the Group of Experts.

**29/103**
**Reports of the geographical/linguistic divisions of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names**

The United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names:

(a) Welcomed the reports submitted by 18 of the 24 geographical/linguistic divisions of the Group of Experts;

(b) Considered in summary form the principal themes and topics addressed in the divisional reports;

(c) Emphasized that the divisional reports provided an indication of considerable progress made in the field of geographical names standardization and that the divisions reported impressive achievements and positive collaboration, while recognizing that challenges remained;

(d) Encouraged experts to read the submitted papers in order to understand the details contained in the 18 divisional reports that could not be conveyed by the brief summary;

(e) Noted that the divisional reports varied considerably in their structure, length and content and that some divisions reported on divisional activities, projects and meetings, while others concentrated on country-based information, reflecting the fact that the divisions have somewhat different focuses and face a variety of challenges and resource constraints;

(f) Agreed that consideration would be given by the Bureau of the Group of Experts to the creation of a template for divisional reports.

**29/104**
**Reports of the liaison officers and international organizations**

The United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names:

(a) Took note of the three written reports and one oral report originating from four liaison officers and international organizations;

(b) Noted that two other liaison reports would be considered separately under agenda items 8 and 9;

(c) Recognized that it is important to maintain the relationship between the Group of Experts and these organizations.

**29/105**
**Report of the Task Team for Africa**

The United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names:

(a) Thanked the Task Team for Africa for its efforts, and took note of the report of the Coordinator;

(b) Recognized that the complex situation in Africa requires a concerted effort by all parties to help to achieve the objectives of the Group of Experts;

(c) Took note of the valuable work accomplished at three events (one colloquium and two training courses) held in Africa since its twenty-eighth session;

(d) Encouraged careful consideration of the Gaborone Action Plan at the colloquium to be held at the University of Blida, Algeria, in November 2016, with collaboration between the Group of Experts and the Task Team for Africa.

**29/106**
**Implementation of resolutions and activities relating to the Working Group on Evaluation and Implementation**

The United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names:

(a) Took note of the reports presented under this agenda item;

(b) Welcomed the efforts of the Working Group to improve the implementation of resolutions through national programmes for the standardization of geographical names and to increase the effectiveness of the activities of the Group of Experts towards this end;

(c) Expressed its appreciation for the Working Group's programme of work, including its preparation and analysis of session and conference evaluation surveys and the creation and maintenance of the database of resolutions of the United Nations Conferences on the Standardization of Geographical Names;

(d) Also expressed its appreciation for the Working Group's involvement in encouraging experts to refer to resolutions in papers submitted at conferences and sessions;

(e) Thanked the Working Group for conducting the workshop at its twenty-ninth session to promote the implementation of resolutions on the topic of commemorative naming;

(f) Recognized the proposal by the Task Team for Africa to create an Africa North and the Sahel Division, and decided to continue to consider the issue, while noting the objection of the Arabic Division;

(g) Expressed its appreciation to the secretariat and members of the Group of Experts for compiling and archiving conference and session documents on the website of the Group of Experts, and to the secretariat of the Group of Experts for agreeing to provide continued support to the project, and recognized that the archive is a valuable resource for the Group of Experts and encouraged its use.

**29/107**
**Activities relating to the Working Group on Training Courses in Toponymy**

The United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names:

(a) Noted that three toponymic training courses had been held since its twenty-eighth session, that there were three planned or potential courses and that additional online learning tools had been developed;

(b) Reported that teaching materials used in its training courses were currently available from the website of the Dutch- and German-speaking Division;

(c) Took note of the report of the liaison officer with the Pan American Institute of Geography and History, and noted that its standard toponymy course could be adapted in its duration and content and was planned to be made available online;

(d) Noted that the toponymy workshop held in Tunis in January 2015 had been successful in guiding the activities of national committees of toponymy, that the road map to establish national authorities for geographical names standardization was to be further elaborated and could serve as a model for use in other countries and that the

leadership of the Vice-Chair of the Group of Experts, from Tunisia, was especially appreciated as fundamental to the success of the course;

(e) Recognized the ongoing production of an advanced toponymy manual, the aim of which is to provide guidance on 44 themes associated with the standardization of geographical names, encouraged experts to volunteer to author the remaining six planned chapters, and reported that the final publication would be made freely available from the website of the Group of Experts in 2017;

(f) Took note of the publication of an online toponymic training course in French that is downloadable and freely available for public use, with the option of a three-week tutored period for a fee, that could lead to the award of an academic citation or, in certain cases, a diploma;

(g) Discussed the mandate of the Group of Experts to facilitate capacity-building in the standardization of geographical names, recalled the history and evolution of toponymic training courses and recognized that such courses had covered multiple topics relating to geographical names and were tailored to specific requirements, noted that capacity-building was pivotal to the ongoing success of the Group of Experts, congratulated the Working Group on Training Courses in Toponymy and the secretariat of the Group of Experts on their past work and future plans, and noted that the Director of the Statistics Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs had outlined modalities for contributing financially to such capacity-building courses;

(h) Encouraged Member States to be proactive and innovative in seeking opportunities to deliver training in association with other geospatially focused activities;

(i) Expressed its appreciation to the Working Group for its efforts.

**29/108**
**Activities relating to the Working Group on Toponymic Data Files and Gazetteers**

The United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names:

(a) Welcomed the reports presented under this agenda item;

(b) Thanked the Working Group on Toponymic Data Files and Gazetteers for its work, and noted the continued high level of interest in its area of responsibility, as evidenced by the large number of reports;

(c) Noted that while the majority of reports addressed national activities, two of them dealt with multinational efforts;

(d) Observed that a common theme of the reports was the expanding use of geographical names data for an increasing range of purposes within national and regional spatial data infrastructures, in line with resolution VIII/6 of the Eighth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names;

(e) Encouraged ongoing national developments in data modelling and management, including the "linked data" method to structure, integrate and publish geographical names data;

(f) Stressed the importance of establishing and providing standardized geographical names as an essential part of geospatial information management, as

recognized by the Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management;

(g) Noted the potential of geospatial data, including standardized geographical names, in supporting the geospatial dimension in the Sustainable Development Goals;[2]

(h) Requested the Working Group, in conjunction with the secretariat of the Group of Experts, to validate and update the hyperlinks published on the website of the Group of Experts;

(i) Acknowledged that action needs to be taken to maintain and update the world geographical names database of the Group of Experts, and encouraged the submission of data to support this initiative.

**29/109**
**Activities relating to the Working Group on Toponymic Terminology**

The United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names:

(a) Took note of the reports presented under this agenda item;

(b) Thanked the Working Group on Toponymic Terminology for its activities;

(c) Recommended that the Working Group consider the proposed changes and additions to the glossary of terms in its upcoming programme of work;

(d) Requested a volunteer to assume the position of Convener following the Eleventh United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names.

**29/110**
**Activities relating to the Working Group on Romanization Systems**

The United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names:

(a) Expressed its appreciation to the Working Group on Romanization Systems for its efforts;

(b) Recognized the history of the Working Group, the current status and implementation of United Nations romanization systems and the update to the website of the Working Group;

(c) Took note in particular of the increased liaison with Working Group 3 of Technical Committee 46 of the International Organization for Standardization, and noted that an updated standard for the romanization of Chinese had been published by the International Organization and that work was progressing towards the transliteration of scripts relating to Thai;

(d) Recorded the implementation of United Nations romanization systems approved at the Tenth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names;

(e) Recommended increasing public and academic awareness of the existence and use of the United Nations-approved romanization systems;

[2] See General Assembly resolution 70/1.

(f) Urged the countries with non-Roman-script languages not yet having United Nations-approved systems to devise, implement and submit their national systems of romanization for approval at forthcoming United Nations Conferences on the Standardization of Geographical Names;

(g) Took note of the introduction of a programme of translation of Japanese generic terms into English for use on maps and other materials in order to facilitate communication for international visitors;

(h) Recognized the complexities in adopting a partial translation of toponyms, and applauded the possibility of Working Group members addressing the issues at the regional level;

(i) Noted that the Task Team for Africa had proposed that particular attention be given to unwritten languages in Africa and that a group be established to address the subject, as well as other groups to study the road map and toponymy of the Sahel region.

**29/111**
**Activities relating to the Working Group on Country Names**

The United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names:

(a) Took note of the reports submitted under this agenda item;

(b) Acknowledged the work of the Working Group on Country Names and expressed its appreciation to the Working Group for its efforts.

**29/112**
**Activities relating to the Working Group on Publicity and Funding**

The United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names:

(a) Took note of the reports presented under this agenda item;

(b) Thanked the Working Group on Publicity and Funding for its efforts, and encouraged the Working Group to continue its excellent work;

(c) Acknowledged the advancements in the digital presence of the Group of Experts through the media kit and the Group of Experts website, Twitter presence and webcast via the YouTube channel;

(d) Supported the establishment of a "World Geographical Names Day" in 2017 to highlight the importance and relevance of the Group of Experts and the standardization of geographical names;

(e) Agreed that the Working Group would be responsible for continuing to coordinate the promotion of the Group of Experts and would work with the Working Group on Evaluation and Implementation on the proposed World Geographical Names Day.

**29/113**
**Activities relating to the Working Group on Exonyms**

The United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names:

(a) Took note of the reports submitted under this agenda item, and acknowledged the very thorough efforts of the Working Group on Exonyms;

(b) Noted the decision of the Working Group to retain the definitions of endonym and exonym as documented in the 2007 addendum to the Glossary of Terms for the Standardization of Geographical Names;

(c) Acknowledged the decision of the Working Group not to define the use of exonyms in a normative way, but to study the current use of exonyms in various forms of communication and in different parts of the world and to establish models and benchmarks;

(d) Welcomed the continued efforts of the Working Group to organize workshops with a focus on the current agenda of the Working Group and to document the deliberations.

**29/114**
**Activities relating to the Working Group on Pronunciation**

The United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names:

(a) Recognized that pronunciation-related studies have a relevant place in toponymy and need to be understood within the proper contexts and situations;

(b) Took note of the report of the Working Group on Pronunciation, which provided a compelling explanation of how pronunciation impacts the work of other working groups;

(c) Thanked the Working Group for its activities.

**29/115**
**Activities relating to the Working Group on Geographical Names as Cultural Heritage**

The United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names:

(a) Took note of the reports submitted under this agenda item;

(b) Noted the value of geographical names as keys to history and identity and the wide range of aspects presented on geographical names as cultural heritage;

(c) Welcomed the offer by the Working Group on Geographical Names as Cultural Heritage to collect examples of good naming practices for online guidelines regarding, for example, commemorative naming and the commercialization of geographical names;

(d) Thanked the Working Group for its activities.

**29/116**
**Toponymic guidelines for map editors and other editors for international use**

The United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names:

(a) Took note of the reports submitted under this agenda item, and welcomed the recent updates to the inventory of toponymic guidelines, as presented by the Coordinator;

(b) Encouraged Member States that had not yet done so to prepare toponymic guidelines in accordance with resolution IV/4 of the Fourth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names;

(c) Requested Member States to regularly update existing toponymic guidelines.

**29/117**
**Other toponymic issues**

The United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names:

(a) Welcomed the reports submitted under this agenda item;

(b) Urged national standardization authorities to continue their critical work and to share their experiences in future sessions.

# II. Items considered by the Group of Experts

## A. Report of the Chair

3. The Group of Experts considered item 2 of its agenda at its 1st and 8th meetings, on 25 and 29 April, respectively. For its consideration of the item, the Group of Experts had before it the report of the Chair, contained in document GEGN/29/10, and working paper WP.67/2, which were presented by the Chair at the 1st meeting. The experts of the Arabic Division, the Dutch- and German-speaking Division, the Asia East Division (other than China), the United States of America/Canada Division, the Norden Division, the French-speaking Division and the Romano-Hellenic Division made comments or raised questions.

**Action taken by the Group of Experts**

4. At its 8th meeting, on 29 April, the Group of Experts adopted a draft decision submitted by the Rapporteurs (see sect. I.B, decision 29/101).

## B. Report of the secretariat of the Group of Experts

5. The Group of Experts considered item 3 of its agenda at its 1st and 8th meetings, on 25 and 29 April, respectively. For its consideration of the item, the Group of Experts had before it the report of the secretariat of the Group of Experts, contained in document GEGN/29/11. At its 1st meeting, the Group of Experts heard an introductory statement by a representative of the secretariat. The expert from the United States of America/Canada Division made a statement, to which the representative of the secretariat responded.

**Action taken by the Group of Experts**

6. At its 8th meeting, on 29 April, the Group of Experts adopted a draft decision submitted by the Rapporteurs (see sect. I.B, decision 29/102).

## C. Reports of the divisions

7. The Group of Experts considered item 4 of its agenda at its 1st, 2nd and 8th meetings, on 25 and 29 April. For its consideration of the item, the Group of Experts had before it, for presentation, working paper WP.76/4/Rev.2, and for information, working papers WP.1/4, WP.16/4, WP.23/4/Rev.1, WP.24/4, WP.31/4/Rev.1, WP.32/4, WP.34/4, WP.35/4, WP.36/4, WP.41/4, WP.42/4/Rev.1, WP.47/4, WP.49/4, WP.52/4, WP.68/4, WP.69/4, WP.77/4/Rev.1 and WP.83/4. At its 1st meeting, the Group of Experts heard an overview statement from the expert from the United Kingdom Division. At the 2nd meeting, the Chair and the experts from the Africa South Division, the Asia East Division (other than China), the Arabic Division and the China Division made comments or raised questions.

**Action taken by the Group of Experts**

8. At its 8th meeting, on 29 April, the Group of Experts adopted a draft decision submitted by the Rapporteurs, as amended (see sect. I.B, decision 29/103).

## D. Report of the liaison officers and international organizations

9. The Group of Experts considered item 5 of its agenda at its 2nd and 8th meetings, on 25 and 29 April, respectively. For its consideration of the item, the Group of Experts had before it, for presentation, working papers WP.19/5, WP.80/5 and WP.84/5, and for information, document GEGN/29/7. At its 2nd meeting, the Group of Experts heard presentations by the liaison officers of the International Hydrographic Organization, the International Council of Onomastic Sciences, the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers and the International Cartographic Association/International Geographical Union. The Chair and the experts from the Arabic Division, the Pacific South-West Division, the Asia East Division (other than China), the Africa South Division and the Dutch- and German-speaking Division, as well as the observer from the International Geographical Names Consortium, made statements or raised questions.

**Action taken by the Group of Experts**

10. At the 8th meeting, on 29 April, the expert from the Dutch- and German-speaking Division made a statement, in the course of which an amendment was proposed to a draft decision submitted by the Rapporteurs. The Group of Experts adopted the draft decision, as amended (see sect. I.B, decision 29/104).

## E. Report of the Task Team for Africa

11. The Group of Experts considered item 6 of its agenda at its 2nd and 8th meetings, on 25 and 29 April, respectively. For its consideration of the item, the Group of Experts had before it for presentation working paper WP.4/6. At its 2nd meeting, the Group of Experts heard a presentation by the Coordinator of the Task Team for Africa. The Chair, the Coordinator, the experts from the Africa South Division, the Arabic Division and the United States of America/Canada Division and the representative of the secretariat made comments or raised questions.

**Action taken by the Group of Experts**

12. At the 8th meeting, on 29 April, the expert from the Arabic Division made a statement, in the course of which an amendment was proposed to a draft decision submitted by the Rapporteurs. The Group of Experts adopted the draft decision, as amended (see sect. I.B, decision 29/105).

## F. Implementation of resolutions and activities relating to the Working Group on Evaluation and Implementation

13. The Group of Experts considered item 7 of its agenda at its 2nd and 8th meetings, on 25 and 29 April, respectively. For its consideration of the item, the Group of Experts had before it, for presentation, working papers WP.14/7, WP.20/7, WP.60/7, WP.63/7 and WP.73/7, and for information, documents GEGN/29/8 and GEGN/29/9. At its 2nd meeting, the Group of Experts heard presentations by the Convener of the Working Group on Evaluation and Implementation and the experts from the United States of America/Canada Division, the Asia East Division (other than China), the Arabic Division and the Africa South Division. The Chair, the Convener, the Coordinator and the experts from the Arabic Division, the United States of America/Canada Division, the Pacific South-West Division, the Dutch- and German-speaking Division and the Baltic Division made comments or raised questions. The Secretary of the Group of Experts provided clarifications to the Group of Experts. The Convener summarized the discussion on the item.

**Action taken by the Group of Experts**

14. At the 8th meeting, on 29 April, the experts from the Arabic Division and the Romano-Hellenic Division made a statement, in the course of which an amendment was proposed to a draft decision submitted by the Rapporteurs. The Chair made a statement. The Group of Experts adopted the draft decision, as amended (see sect. I.B, decision 29/106).

## G. Activities relating to the Working Group on Training Courses in Toponymy

15. The Group of Experts considered item 8 of its agenda at its 3rd, 4th and 8th meetings, on 26 and 29 April. For its consideration of the item, the Group of Experts had before it, for presentation, working papers WP.30/8, WP.33/8, WP.51/8, WP.53/8, WP.81/8 and WP.85/8, and for information, working paper WP.48/8. At its 3rd meeting, the Group of Experts heard presentations by the Convener of the Working Group on Training Courses in Toponymy and the experts from the United States of America/Canada Division and the French-speaking Division, as well as by the representatives of the secretariat of the Group of Experts. The Convener and the experts from the Asia South-East Division, the United States of America/Canada Division, the Africa South Division, the Arabic Division, the Africa Central Division and the Pacific South-West Division, as well as the observer from the International Geographical Names Consortium, made comments and raised questions, to which the presenters of the working papers responded. At the 4th meeting, the Convener and the experts from the United States of America/Canada

Division and the Africa South Division made comments and raised questions. The Convener summarized the discussion on the item.

**Action taken by the Group of Experts**

16. At the 8th meeting, on 29 April, the expert from the French-speaking Division made a statement, in the course of which an amendment was proposed to a draft decision submitted by the Rapporteurs. The Group of Experts adopted the draft decision, as amended (see sect. I.B, decision 29/107).

## H. Activities relating to the Working Group on Toponymic Data Files and Gazetteers

17. The Group of Experts considered item 9 of its agenda at its 4th and 8th meetings, on 26 and 29 April, respectively. For its consideration of the item, the Group of Experts had before it, for presentation, working papers WP.2/9, WP.18/9, WP.21/9/Rev.1, WP.27/9, WP.37/9, WP.38/9, WP.39/9, WP.44/9, WP.65/9 and WP.71/9, and for information, working papers WP.5/9, WP.6/9, WP.25/9, WP.40/9 and WP.79/9. At its 4th meeting, the Group of Experts heard presentations by the Convener of the Working Group on Toponymic Data Files and Gazetteers and the experts from the East Central and South-East Europe Division, the Norden Division, the Dutch- and German-speaking Division, the United States of America/Canada Division and the Asia East Division (other than China). The Convener and experts from the United States of America/Canada Division, the Arabic Division, the Romano-Hellenic Division, the Dutch- and German-speaking Division, the Africa East Division, the Baltic Division, the Africa South Division, the Pacific South-West Division, the China Division and the Asia South-East Division made comments and raised questions, to which the presenters of the working papers responded. The Convener summarized the discussion on the item.

**Action taken by the Group of Experts**

18. At the 8th meeting, on 29 April, the expert from the Norden Division made a statement, in the course of which an amendment was proposed to a draft decision submitted by the Rapporteurs. The Group of Experts adopted the draft decision, as amended (see sect. I.B, decision 29/108).

## I. Activities relating to the Working Group on Toponymic Terminology

19. The Group of Experts considered item 10 of its agenda at its 4th, 5th and 8th meetings, on 26, 27 and 29 April. For its consideration of the item, the Group of Experts had before it, for presentation, working papers WP.3/10/Rev.1, WP.8/10 and WP.72/10, and for information, working papers WP.17/10 and WP.87/10. At its 4th meeting, the Group of Experts heard presentations by the experts from the Arabic Division, the Dutch- and German-speaking Division and the United States of America/Canada Division. The Convener of the Working Group on Toponymic Terminology and experts from the United Kingdom Division, the Asia East Division (other than China), the Dutch- and German-speaking Division and the Baltic Division made comments and raised questions, to which the presenters of the

working papers responded. At the 5th meeting, the Convener summarized the discussion on the item.

**Action taken by the Group of Experts**

20. At its 8th meeting, on 29 April, the Group of Experts adopted a draft decision submitted by the Rapporteurs (see sect. I.B, decision 29/109).

## J. Activities relating to the Working Group on Romanization Systems

21. The Group of Experts considered item 11 of its agenda at its 5th and 8th meetings, on 27 and 29 April, respectively. For its consideration of the item, the Group of Experts had before it for presentation working papers WP.22/11 and WP.50/11. At its 5th meeting, the Group of Experts heard a presentation by the Convener of the Working Group on Romanization Systems, as well as by the expert from the Asia East Division (other than China). The Convener and experts from the China Division, the Arabic Division, the East Central and South-East Europe Division, the Asia East Division (other than China), the United Kingdom Division and the Dutch- and German-speaking Division made comments and raised questions, to which the presenters of the working papers responded. The Convener summarized the discussion on the item.

**Action taken by the Group of Experts**

22. At the 8th meeting, on 29 April, the experts from the Asia East Division (other than China), the China Division, the Arabic Division and the Romano-Hellenic Division and the Convener of the Working Group on Romanization Systems made statements, in the course of which amendments were proposed to a draft decision submitted by the Rapporteurs. The Group of Experts adopted the draft decision, as amended (see sect. I.B, decision 29/110).

## K. Activities relating to the Working Group on Country Names

23. The Group of Experts considered item 12 of its agenda at its 5th and 8th meetings, on 27 and 29 April, respectively. For its consideration of the item, the Group of Experts had before it, for presentation, working paper WP.57/12, and for information, working paper WP.74/12. At its 5th meeting, the Group of Experts heard presentations by the experts from the Portuguese-speaking Division and the United States of America/Canada Division. The Convener of the Working Group on Country Names and experts from the Dutch- and German-speaking Division, the Asia South-West Division (other than Arabic), the Romano-Hellenic Division and the Arabic Division made comments and raised questions, to which the presenters of the working papers responded. The Convener summarized the discussion on the item.

**Action taken by the Group of Experts**

24. At the 8th meeting, on 29 April, the expert from the Romano-Hellenic Division and the Convener of the Working Group on Country Names made statements, in the course of which an amendment was proposed to a draft decision submitted by the Rapporteurs. The Group of Experts adopted the draft decision, as amended (see sect. I.B, decision 29/111).

## L. Activities relating to the Working Group on Publicity and Funding

25. The Group of Experts considered item 13 of its agenda at its 5th, 6th and 8th meetings, on 27 and 29 April. For its consideration of the item, the Group of Experts had before it, for presentation, working papers WP.61/13, WP.66/13 and WP.75/13/Rev.1, and for information, working paper WP.62/13. At its 5th meeting, the Group of Experts heard presentations by the experts from the United Kingdom Division and the Asia East Division (other than China). The Chair and experts from the United States of America/Canada Division, the Asia East Division (other than China), the Africa South Division and the French-speaking Division made comments and raised questions, to which the presenters of the working papers responded. The representative of the secretariat of the Group of Experts provided clarifications to the members of the Group of Experts. At its 6th meeting, the Group of Experts heard a presentation by the expert from the Asia East Division (other than China). The Chair and experts from the Arabic Division, the United States of America/Canada Division and the Africa South Division made comments and raised questions, to which the presenter of working paper WP.66/13 responded. The Chair summarized the discussion on the item.

### Action taken by the Group of Experts

26. At the 8th meeting, on 29 April, the expert from the Asia East Division (other than China) made a statement. The Group of Experts adopted a draft decision submitted by the Rapporteurs (see sect. I.B, decision 29/112).

## M. Activities relating to the Working Group on Exonyms

27. The Group of Experts considered item 14 of its agenda at its 6th and 8th meetings, on 27 and 29 April, respectively. For its consideration of the item, the Group of Experts had before it, for presentation, working paper WP.9/14, and for information, working papers WP.7/14 and WP.12/14. At its 6th meeting, the Group of Experts heard a presentation by the Convener of the Working Group on Exonyms. The Convener and experts from the Dutch- and German-speaking Division, the Romano-Hellenic Division, the Arabic Division and the French-speaking Division made comments and raised questions, to which the presenter responded. The Convener summarized the discussion on the item.

### Action taken by the Group of Experts

28. At its 8th meeting, on 29 April, the Group of Experts adopted a draft decision submitted by the Rapporteurs (see sect. I.B, decision 29/113).

## N. Activities relating to the Working Group on Pronunciation

29. The Group of Experts considered item 15 of its agenda at its 6th and 8th meetings, on 27 and 29 April, respectively. For its consideration of the item, the Group of Experts had before it, for presentation, working paper WP.45/15, and for information, working papers WP.46/15/Rev.1 and WP.88/15. At its 6th meeting, the Group of Experts heard a presentation by the Convener of the Working Group on Pronunciation. The Convener and experts from the China Division and the Dutch-

and German-speaking Division made comments or raised questions, to which the presenter responded. The Convener summarized the discussion on the item.

**Action taken by the Group of Experts**

30. At its 8th meeting, on 29 April, the Group of Experts adopted a draft decision submitted by the Rapporteurs (see sect. I.B, decision 29/114).

## O. Activities relating to the Working Group on Geographical Names as Cultural Heritage

31. The Group of Experts considered item 16 of its agenda at its 6th, 7th and 8th meetings, on 27, 28 and 29 April, respectively. For its consideration of the item, the Group of Experts had before it, for presentation, working papers WP.10/16, WP.11/16, WP.28/16, WP.43/16/Rev.1, WP.56/16, WP.64/16, WP.70/16 and WP.78/16, and for information, working papers WP.59/16, WP.82/16 and WP.86/16. At its 6th meeting, the Group of Experts heard presentations by the Convener of the Working Group on Geographical Names as Cultural Heritage and experts from the United States of America/Canada Division, the Pacific South-West Division, the Dutch- and German-speaking Division, the China Division and the Norden Division. The Convener and experts from the United States of America/Canada Division, the Romano-Hellenic Division, the Arabic Division, the Asia East Division (other than China), the Baltic Division, the Pacific South-West Division, the United Kingdom Division, the Africa South Division, the East Central and South-East Europe Division and the Africa East Division made comments and raised questions, to which the presenters of the working papers responded. At its 7th meeting, the Group of Experts heard presentations by the Asia East Division (other than China) and the Dutch- and German-speaking Division. The Convener and experts from the China Division made comments and raised questions, to which the presenters of the working papers responded. The Convener summarized the discussion on the item.

**Action taken by the Group of Experts**

32. At the 8th meeting, on 29 April, the experts from the Asia East Division (other than China) and the Norden Division made statements, in the course of which an amendment was proposed to a draft decision submitted by the Rapporteurs. The Group of Experts adopted the draft decision, as amended (see sect. I.B, decision 29/115).

## P. Toponymic guidelines for map editors and other editors for international use

33. The Group of Experts considered item 17 of its agenda at its 7th and 8th meetings, on 28 and 29 April, respectively. For its consideration of the item, the Group of Experts had before it for presentation working papers WP.13/17, WP.29/17, WP.54/17 and WP.58/17. At its 7th meeting, the Group of Experts heard presentations by the Coordinator of the Working Group on Toponymic Guidelines and the experts from the Norden Division, the Africa South Division and the Asia East Division (other than China). The Chair and experts from the Arabic Division and the United

Kingdom Division made comments or raised questions, to which the presenters of the working papers responded. The Chair summarized the discussion on the item.

**Action taken by the Group of Experts**

34. At its 8th meeting, on 29 April, the Group of Experts adopted a draft decision submitted by the Rapporteurs (see sect. I.B, decision 29/116).

## Q. Other toponymic issues

35. The Group of Experts considered item 18 of its agenda at its 7th and 8th meetings, on 28 and 29 April, respectively. For its consideration of the item, the Group of Experts had before it, for presentation, working paper WP.26/18, and for information, working paper WP.15/18. At its 7th meeting, the Group of Experts heard a presentation by the expert from the Norden Division. The Chair summarized the discussion on the item.

**Action taken by the Group of Experts**

36. At its 8th meeting, on 29 April, the Group of Experts adopted a draft decision submitted by the Rapporteurs (see sect. I.B, decision 29/117).

## R. Preparation for the Eleventh United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names

37. The Group of Experts considered item 19 of its agenda at its 7th meeting, on 28 April. The Chair brought to the attention of the Group of Experts the provisional agenda for the Eleventh United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names (GEGN/29/3), which had been adopted at the Tenth Conference. The expert from the United States of America/Canada Division made a statement, in the course of which she proposed a revision of the provisional agenda of the Conference.

**Action taken by the Group of Experts**

38. At its 7th meeting, the Group of Experts decided to recommend to the Economic and Social Council a revision of the provisional agenda of the Conference (see sect. I.A, draft decision I).

## S. Review of the statute of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names

39. The Group of Experts considered item 20 of its agenda at its 7th meeting, on 28 April. For its consideration of the item, the Group of Experts had before it for presentation working paper WP.55/20. The Group of Experts heard a presentation by the expert from the Norden Division. The Chair and experts from the Asia East Division (other than China), the Asia South-West Division (other than Arabic) and the Arabic Division made comments or raised questions, to which the presenter responded.

**Action taken by the Group of Experts**

40. At its 7th meeting, the Group of Experts decided to recommend to the Economic and Social Council amendments to the statute, as contained in working paper WP.55/20 (see sect. I.A, draft decision II).

## T. Special presentations

41. During the session, the Group of Experts heard the following special presentations:

(a) "The power of place and place names: United Nations Initiative on Global Geospatial Information Management and United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names", delivered at the 3rd meeting by the representative of the Statistics Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs. The Chair and the experts from the Dutch- and German-speaking Division, the Arabic Division and the Africa South Division made comments and raised questions, to which the presenter responded.

(b) "Online discussion forum of the Working Group on Toponymic Data Files and Gazetteers", delivered at the 4th meeting by the expert from the Dutch- and German-speaking Division, Pier-Giorgio Zaccheddu. The Chair and the expert from the Norden Division made comments and raised questions, to which the presenter responded.

(c) "Progress and challenges for space technology applications in Asia and the Pacific", delivered at the 5th meeting by a representative of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP). The Chair and experts from the Asia South-East Division and the Arabic Division made comments and raised questions, to which the presenter responded.

(d) "Australia and New Zealand: a comparison of indigenous naming processes", delivered at the 6th meeting by the expert from the Pacific South-West Division. The Chair and experts from the Dutch- and German-speaking Division, the Africa South Division, the Arabic Division and the Asia East Division (other than China) made comments and raised questions, to which the presenter responded.

(e) "Innovation in naming: case studies and challenges for geographical names in 2016", delivered at the 7th meeting by an observer from the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers. The Chair and experts from the Baltic Division made comments and raised questions, to which the presenter responded.

(f) "Three-word addresses as a global location reference system", delivered at the 8th meeting by a representative of "what3words". The Chair and the experts from the Romano-Hellenic Division, the United States of America/Canada Division, the Baltic Division, the Arabic Division, the Africa South Division, the Norden Division, the Asia South-East Division, the Asia East Division (other than China) and the United Kingdom Division made comments and raised questions, to which the presenter responded.

# III. Dates, venue and provisional agenda for the thirtieth session of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names

42. The Group of Experts considered item 21 of its agenda at its 7th meeting, on 28 April. For its consideration of the item, the Group of Experts had before it the provisional agenda for the thirtieth session of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names (GEGN/29/6), with the session's date orally revised. The Chair and the experts from the United States of America/Canada Division, the Dutch- and German-speaking Division, the Arabic Division and the Asia East Division (other than China) made comments and raised questions. The representative of the secretariat provided clarifications.

**Action taken by the Group of Experts**

43. At its 7th meeting, the Group of Experts adopted the dates, venue and provisional agenda for its thirtieth session, as contained in document GEGN/29/6, with the dates orally revised (see sect. I.A, draft decision I).

# IV. Adoption of the report

44. The Group of Experts considered item 22 of its agenda at its 8th meeting, on 29 April. The Group of Experts had before it the draft report on its twenty-ninth session (GEGN/29/L.3/Rev.1), together with an informal paper containing draft conclusions, recommendations and decisions of the session, both of which were introduced by the Rapporteurs.

45. At the same meeting, the Chair, the Rapporteurs and the experts from the United States of America/Canada Division and the Asia South-West Division (other than Arabic) made comments and raised questions.

**Action taken by the Group of Experts**

46. At its 8th meeting, on 29 April, the Group of Experts adopted the draft report on its twenty-ninth session, as orally amended, together with the recommendations and decisions contained in the informal paper, and entrusted the Rapporteurs to finalize the report by reflecting the proceedings of the meeting.

# V. Organization of the session

## A. Opening and duration of the session

47. Pursuant to Economic and Social Council decision 2014/240, the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names held its twenty-ninth session in Bangkok from 25 to 29 April 2016. The Group of Experts held eight meetings.

## B. Attendance

48. The session was attended by 180 participants representing 22 of the 24 geographic/linguistic divisions of the Group of Experts from 49 Member States (see

annex). Of the total participants, eight were observers and five represented the United Nations Secretariat. The list of participants is contained in document GEGN/29/4.

## C. Officers of the session

49. The officers of the session were as follows:

*Chair*:
Bill **Watt** (Australia)

*Vice-Chairs*:
Ferjan **Ormeling** (Netherlands)
Naima **Friha** (Tunisia)

*Rapporteurs*:
Peder **Gammeltoft** (Denmark) (in his absence, Catherine **Cheetham** (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland) rendered assistance)
Trent **Palmer** (United States of America)

For the names of the Chairs of the divisions, see http://unstats.un.org/unsd/geoinfo/ungegn/divisions.html. The officers of the working groups were:

Task Team for Africa

*Convener*:
Brahim Atoui

Working Group on Training Courses in Toponymy

*Convener*:
Ferjan Ormeling

Working Group on Toponymic Data Files and Gazetteers

*Convener*:
Pier-Giorgio Zaccheddu

Working Group on Toponymic Terminology

*Convener*:
Staffan Nyström

Working Group on Romanization Systems

*Convener*:
Peeter Päll

Working Group on Country Names

*Conveners*:
Élisabeth Calvarin
Leo Dillon

Working Group on Publicity and Funding

*Convener*:
Peder Gammeltoft

Working Group on Evaluation and Implementation

*Convener*:
Sungjae Choo

Working Group on Exonyms

*Convener*:
Peter Jordan

Working Group on Pronunciation

*Convener*:
Tjeerd Tichelaar

Working Group on Geographical Names as Cultural Heritage

*Conveners*:
Annette Torensjö
Leif Nilsson

## D. Opening statements

50. The Chair opened the session on 25 April 2016 and made opening remarks.

51. The Deputy Director of the Royal Thai Survey Department, Major-General Suppalert Chaichana, gave the welcoming address, in which he highlighted the significant role of geographical names in many national activities and encouraged the wide use of standardized geographical names. The Deputy Executive Secretary of ESCAP, Hongjoo Hahm, made a statement.

52. The Director of the Statistics Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs made an opening statement, in which he thanked the Group of Experts for its accomplishments and ESCAP for hosting the twenty-ninth session. In addition, he encouraged the Group of Experts to continue the review process to modernize its working methods and to strengthen its substantive relationship with the Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management.

## E. Adoption of the agenda

53. At its 1st meeting, on 25 April, the Group of Experts adopted its agenda (GEGN/29/1), as follows:

1. Adoption of the agenda and of the provisional programme of work.
2. Report of the Chair.
3. Report of the secretariat of the Group of Experts.
4. Reports of the divisions.

5. Reports of the liaison officers and international organizations.
6. Activities relating to the Task Team for Africa.
7. Implementation of resolutions and activities relating to the Working Group on Evaluation and Implementation.
8. Activities relating to the Working Group on Training Courses in Toponymy.
9. Activities relating to the Working Group on Toponymic Data Files and Gazetteers.
10. Activities relating to the Working Group on Toponymic Terminology.
11. Activities relating to the Working Group on Romanization Systems.
12. Activities relating to the Working Group on Country Names.
13. Activities relating to the Working Group on Publicity and Funding.
14. Activities relating to the Working Group on Exonyms.
15. Activities relating to the Working Group on Pronunciation.
16. Activities relating to the Working Group on Geographical Names as Cultural Heritage.
17. Toponymic guidelines for map and other editors for international use.
18. Other toponymic issues.
19. Preparation for the Eleventh United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names.
20. Review of the statute of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names
21. Dates, venue and provisional agenda for the thirtieth session of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names.
22. Adoption of the report.

54. At the same meeting, the Group of Experts adopted its organization of work (GEGN/29/12/Rev.2).

## F. Documentation

55. The documents before the Group of Experts at its twenty-ninth session are available from the website of the Statistics Division, at http://unstats.un.org/unsd/geoinfo/ungegn/ungegnSession29.html.

# Annex

## List of participating divisions

Africa Central Division

Africa East Division

Africa South Division

Arabic Division

Asia East Division (other than China)

Asia South-East Division

Asia South-West Division (other than Arabic)

Baltic Division

Celtic Division

China Division

Dutch- and German-speaking Division

East Central and South-East Europe Division

Eastern Europe, Northern and Central Asia Division

East Mediterranean Division (other than Arabic)

French-speaking Division

Latin America Division

Norden Division

Pacific South-West Division

Portuguese-speaking Division

Romano-Hellenic Division

United Kingdom Division

United States of America/Canada Division